

# MARTHA GRAHAM

DANCE COMPANY



55 Bethune Street | New York, NY 10014 | 212.229.9200



## ABOUT THE COMPANY

The Martha Graham Dance Company has been a leader in the development of contemporary dance since its founding in 1926. Informed by the expansive vision of pioneering choreographer Martha Graham, the Company brings to life a timeless and uniquely American style of dance that has influenced generations of artists and continues to captivate audiences. Graham and her Company have expanded the contemporary dance vocabulary of movement and forever altered the scope of the art form by rooting works in contemporary social, political, psychological, and sexual contexts, deepening their impact and resonance.

Always a fertile ground for experimentation, the Martha Graham Dance Company has been an unparalleled resource in nurturing many of the leading choreographers and dancers of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Merce Cunningham, Erick Hawkins, Pearl Lang, Pascal Rioult, and Paul Taylor. Graham's repertory of 181 works has also engaged noted performers such as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Claire Bloom, Margot Fonteyn, Liza Minnelli, Rudolf Nureyev, Maya Plisetskaya, and Kathleen Turner. Her groundbreaking techniques and unmistakable style have earned the Company acclaim from audiences in more than 50 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Today, the Company continues to foster Graham's spirit of ingenuity. It is embracing a new programming vision that showcases masterpieces by Graham, her contemporaries, and their successors, alongside newly commissioned works by contemporary artists inspired by Graham's legacy. With programs that unite the work of choreographers across time within a rich historical and thematic narrative, the Company is actively working to create new platforms for contemporary dance and multiple points of access for audiences.

The Martha Graham Dance Company's repertory includes Graham masterpieces *Appalachian Spring*, *Lamentation*, *Cave of the Heart*, *Night Journey*, and *Chronicle*, among other works. The Company continues to expand its mission to present the work of its founder and her contemporaries, and remains a leader by catalyzing new works with commissions that bring fresh perspectives to dance classics, including *Lamentation Variations* (2007), which provides presenters with the opportunity to commission a new variation with a guest choreographer of their choice. Multimedia programs such as *Prelude and Revolt* (2007), use a montage of several works connected through text and media.



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Martha Graham's revolutionary vision and artistic mastery has had a deep and lasting impact on American art and culture. Her bold use of socially infused subjects and emotionally charged performances single-handedly defined contemporary dance as a uniquely American art form, which the nation has in turn shared with the world. Graham's creativity crossed artistic boundaries and embraced every artistic genre. She collaborated with and commissioned work from the leading visual artists, musicians, and designers of her day, including sculptor Isamu Noguchi and fashion designers Halston, Donna Karan, and Calvin Klein, as well as composers Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, William Schuman, Norman Dello Joio, and Gian Carlo Menotti.

Influencing generations of choreographers and dancers including Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and Twyla Tharp, Graham forever altered the scope of dance. Classical ballet dancers Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, and Mikhail Baryshnikov sought her out to broaden their artistry, and artists of all genres were eager to study and work with Graham – she taught actors including Bette Davis, Kirk Douglas, Madonna, Liza Minelli, Gregory Peck, Tony Randall, Eli Wallach, Anne Jackson, and Joanne Woodward to utilize their bodies as expressive instruments. Today, renowned artists remain attracted to her work; Diana Visnehva and Blythe Danner have appeared in recent performances.

Graham's groundbreaking style grew from her experimentation with the elemental movements of contraction and release. By focusing on the basic activities of the human form, she enlivened the body with raw, electric emotion. The sharp, angular, and direct movements of her technique were a dramatic departure from the predominant style of the time.

With an artistic practice deeply ingrained in the rhythm of American life and the struggles of the individual, Graham brought a distinctly American sensibility to every theme she explored. "A dance reveals the spirit of the country in which it takes root. No sooner does it fail to do this than it loses its integrity and significance," she wrote in the 1937 essay "A Platform for the American Dance".

Consistently infused with social, political, psychological, and sexual themes, Graham's choreography is timeless, connecting with audiences past and present. Works such as *Revolt* (1927), *Immigrant: Steerage, Strike* (1928), and *Chronicle* (1936) – created the same year she turned down Hitler's invitation to perform at the International Arts Festival organized in conjunction with the Olympic Games in Berlin – personify Graham's commitment to addressing challenging contemporary issues and distinguish her as a conscientious and politically powerful artist.

## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

JANET EILBER has been the Martha Graham Center's Artistic Director since 2005. Her direction has focused on creating new forms of audience access to the Martha Graham masterworks. These initiatives include designing contextual programming, educational and community partnerships, use of new media, and commissions and creative events such as the *Lamentation Variations* and *Prelude and Revolt*. In recent projects, she has created new arrangements of classic Graham choreography for such wide-ranging projects as the Martha Graham Google Doodle and the Italian theater production of *Cercando Picasso* starring Giorgio Albertazzi. Earlier in her career, as a principal dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company, Ms. Eilber worked closely with Martha Graham. She danced many of Graham's greatest



roles, had roles created for her by Graham, and was directed by Graham in most of the major roles of the repertory. She soloed at the White House, was partnered by Rudolf Nureyev, starred in three segments of *Dance in America*, and has since taught, lectured, and directed Graham ballets internationally. Apart from her work with Graham, Ms. Eilber has performed in films, on television, and on Broadway, directed by such greats as Agnes de Mille and Bob Fosse, and has received four Lester Horton Awards for her reconstruction and performance of seminal American modern dance. She has served as Director of Arts Education for the Dana Foundation, guiding the Foundation's support for Teaching Artist training and contributing regularly to its arts education publications. Ms. Eilber is a Trustee Emerita of the Interlochen Center for the Arts. She is married to screenwriter/director John Warren, with whom she has two daughters, Madeline and Eva.



## TOURING REPERTORY 2016-2017

The Martha Graham Dance Company offers moving and authentic Graham experiences centered on engaging themes for a range of audiences and venues, which combine Graham classics with contemporary works created for the Company by artists such as Nacho Duato, Andonis Foniadakis, and Doug Varone. The popular "Shape and Design", available once again during the Company's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, celebrates the distinctly American form of Modernism rooted in dynamism, athleticism, and simplicity, highlighting the work of Graham and her theatrical contemporaries. The "Inner Landscape" themed programs focus on psychological works while "Myth & Transformation" brings together dances that illuminate iconic stories or characters in new ways. Multimedia events are available such as *Prelude and Revolt*, which charts the era when Martha Graham burst on the scene, and Essential Graham programs are designed for smaller venues. A Noguchi/Graham program includes three of Graham's greatest masterworks with sets by the sculptor Isamu Noguchi. Recent additions to the repertory include a new production of *The Rite of Spring*.

The Company regularly customizes programs and ancillary events for a specific venue, an anniversary, or campus-wide theme drawing from the classic repertory. Local celebrities often provide narration for these venue-specific performances. The available classic repertory spans eight decades, showing the staggering scope and beauty of Martha Graham's work, from the power and simplicity of the all-woman group works and early solos to the acclaimed classics. Her ballets were inspired by a wide variety of sources including modern painting, heroic women, the American frontier, and Greek mythology. These provide fertile connections for many interdisciplinary activities. Performances also feature Isamu Noguchi's most beautiful sets, original lighting, and costumes by Martha Graham, Donna Karan and Calvin Klein, and original scores by American composers Aaron Copland, Gian-Carlo Menotti, Norman Dello Joio, and Samuel Barber. Collaborations with local orchestras on programs featuring these important scores are extremely well received.

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Touring program to be designed from our current repertory:

## THEMATIC PROGRAMS

- Shape and Design
- Myth & Transformation
- Inner Landscape Program (psychological dances)
- Noguchi/Graham Program
- Essential Graham
- *Prelude and Revolt*

These programs contain a selection of dances from the great Graham masterworks. Over 15 masterworks are available: from *Appalachian Spring* to *Maple Leaf Rag* and *Night Journey*.

## CLASSICS BY MARTHA GRAHAM

- The Early Solos
  - *Serenata Morisca, Lamentation, Satyric Festival Song, Deep Song, Imperial Gesture*
- *Acts of Light*
- *Appalachian Spring*
- *Appalachian Spring Suite*
- *At Summer's Full* (selections from *Letter to the World* - 1940)
- *Cave of the Heart*
- *Chronicle*
- *Diversion of Angels*
- *El Penitente*
- *Errand into the Maze* (may be performed with or without sets)
- *Maple Leaf Rag*
- *Moon* (from *Canticle for Innocent Comedians*)
- *Night Journey*
- *Prelude and Revolt*
- *Panorama Project*
- *The Rite of Spring*

Other masterworks by Graham may be returned to the repertory by special request.

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## WORKS BY OTHER ARTISTS

- *Axe* (2015) by Mats Ek
- *Lamentation Variations*
- *Rust* (2013) by Nacho Duato
- *Echo* (2013) by Andonis Foniadakis
- *Depak Ine* (2014) by Nacho Duato
- New works by Marie Chouinard, Pontus Lindberg, and Christopher Williams

Programs can be customized for every venue.



## NOTES ABOUT THE DANCES

### **ACTS OF LIGHT** (1981)

*Acts of Light* premiered in Washington DC at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on February 26, 1981. Taking its title from a phrase by Emily Dickinson, a poet beloved by Graham, the dance introduced a new period in Graham's work. Devoid of theatrical trappings, *Acts of Light* celebrates the dancer as an exquisite instrument of expression, while making references to earlier works in the Graham canon such as her duet for the lovers Helen of Troy and Paris and her lament for Andromache and the Trojan women. Former *New York Times* dance critic Anna Kisselgoff called the work neo-classical. The score for the ballet is by the 19th-century Danish composer Carl Nielsen – another divergence for Graham, who typically sought out contemporary composers for her work. Composed in three sections, the dance begins with "Conversation of Lovers," a duet exploring the constant, yet ever-changing, ties that exist between lovers. The music for the second section, "Lament," was composed by Nielsen in response to the death of a friend. Graham made a dance for a solo female figure surrounded by five male witnesses. The body of the woman is encased in an elastic white fabric. According to one critic, the fabric acted as a "membrane...abstracting the shapes of grief [the dancer's] body makes." The reference to Graham's own 1930 *Lamentation* is clear. "Ritual to the Sun," the final section, is an ode to the Graham classroom technique.

### **APPALACHIAN SPRING** (1944)

In 1942, Martha Graham received a commission from the Elizabeth Spargue Coolidge Foundation for a new ballet to be premiered at the Library of Congress. Aaron Copland was to compose the score. Graham called the new dance *Appalachian Spring*, after a poem by Hart Crane, but for Copland it always remained "Ballet for Martha." Choreographed as the war in Europe was drawing to end, it captured the imagination of Americans who were beginning to believe in a more prosperous future, a future in which men and woman would be united again. With its simple tale of a new life in a new land, the dance embodied hope. Critics called *Appalachian Spring* "shining and joyous," "a testimony to the simple fitness of the human spirit." The ballet tells the story of a young couple and their wedding day; there is a Husbandman, his Bride, a Pioneer Woman, a Preacher and his Followers.

In a letter to Aaron Copland, Graham wrote that she wanted the dance to be "a legend of American living, like a bone structure, the inner frame that holds together a people." As Copland later recalled, "After Martha gave me this bare outline, I knew certain crucial things—that it had to do with the pioneer American spirit, with youth and spring, with optimism and hope. I thought about that in combination with the special quality of Martha's own personality, her talents as a dancer, and what she gave off and the basic simplicity of her art. Nobody else seems anything like Martha, and she's unquestionably very American." Themes from American folk culture can be found throughout the dance. Copland uses a shaker tune, "Simple Gifts," in the second half of his luminous score, while

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Graham's choreography includes square dance patterns, skips and paddle turns and curtsies, even a grand right and left. The set by Isamu Noguchi features a Shaker rocking chair. *Appalachian Spring* is perhaps Martha Graham's most optimistic ballet, yet it does contain a dark side. The fire and brimstone Preacher and his condemnation of earthly pleasures recalls the repressive weight of our Puritan heritage, while the solemn presence of the Pioneer Woman hints at the problems of raising families in remote and isolated communities. In this newly cleared land, life was not simple, and Graham's vision pays homage to that as well.

## **APPALACHIAN SPRING SUITE (1944)**

*Appalachian Spring Suite* is a narrated presentation of highlights from *Appalachian Spring* that gives the audience an inside look at the remarkable collaboration between Martha Graham and Aaron Copland. The dancing is introduced by text borrowed from Graham's letters to Copland. Her eloquent and intimate descriptions of the characters, setting and atmosphere for the work are matched with the end result – the music and dance they inspired. Copland's Pulitzer Prize winning score and the clean, athletic Graham choreography clearly embody her early writings about the dance. *Appalachian Spring Suite* offers the audience unique insight into the creative process of these two geniuses.

## **AT SUMMER'S FULL (1940)**

### **(Selections from *Letter to the World*)**

*At Summer's Full* is an arrangement of several selections from "Letter to the World," the Graham classic from 1940 which was inspired by the life and poetry of Emily Dickinson. The multi-faceted original work uses over twenty Dickinson poems that are spoken during the dance and the action is built on the legend rather than the facts of her life. This new, 20-minute arrangement uses only the sections of *Letter to the World* that relate to the themes of love and love lost. The title comes from the poem that inspired the central duet of this new suite.

## **CAVE OF THE HEART (1946)**

Premiered at Columbia University in 1946 and originally entitled *Serpent Heart*, this dance is a psychological study of the destructive powers of love, the dark passions that guard that human heart, coiled like a serpent ready to strike when attacked. Medea, princess of the kingdom of Colchis, was known as a sorceress. Pierced by Cupid's bow, she fell in love with the adventurer Jason and used her magical powers to help him gain the Golden Fleece. Sacrificing all that was dear to her, she fled with him to his home in the kingdom of Corinth, where they lived as man and wife and had two small children. But Jason was ambitious, and when offered the Princess of Corinth in marriage, he abandoned Medea. This is the moment in which Martha Graham's dance begins.

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Betrayed and exiled from her home, Medea plots a course that will end with death of her rival, the Princess, and the murder of her own two children. The Chorus, foreseeing the tragedy about to be enacted, tries to prevent it, and suffers its unfolding. Graham's dance confronts us with the horror of a woman betrayed, so crazed by vengeance that she commits the unthinkable, murder not only of her lover's new wife, but of her own children. She is the most detestable of beings, but she is not alien to us. In her exploration of these dark and primal passions, Graham reveals the full range of what it is to be human. Ultimately this is a dance of transformation as the Sorceress (Medea), cleansed by flames, is returned to her father the Sun.

## **CHRONICLE (1936)**

*Chronicle* premiered at the Guild Theater in New York City on December 20, 1936. The dance was a response to the menace of fascism in Europe; earlier that year, Graham had refused an invitation to take part in the 1936 Olympic Games in Germany, stating; "I would find it impossible to dance in Germany at the present time. So many artists that I know and respect have been persecuted, have been deprived of the right to work for ridiculous and unsatisfactory reasons, that I should consider it impossible to identify myself, by accepting the invitation, with the regime that has made such things possible. In addition, some of my concert group would not be welcomed in Germany" (a reference to the fact that many members of her group were Jewish). According to the original program note, "*Chronicle* does not attempt to show the actualities of war; rather does it, by evoking war's images, set forth the fateful prelude to war, portray the devastation of spirit which it leaves in its wake, and suggest an answer."

This is one of the very few dances Martha Graham made which can be said to express explicitly political ideas, but, unlike *Immediate Tragedy* (1937) and *Deep Song* (1937), dances she made in response to the Spanish Civil War, this dance is not a realistic depiction of events. The intent is to universalize the tragedy of war. The original dance with a score by Wallingford Riegger was forty minutes in length, divided into three sections: "Dances before Catastrophe—Spectre 1914 and Masque." "Dances after Catastrophe—Steps in the Streets and Tragic Holiday" and "Prelude to Action." The Company has reconstructed and now performs "Spectre 1914," "Steps in the Street," and "Prelude to Action."

## **DEEP SONG (1937)**

*Deep Song* premiered at the Guild Theater in New York in 1937. Set to music by Henry Cowell, the dance was composed in response to the Spanish Civil War. *Deep Song* was a cry of anguish, an embodiment of Martha Graham's fears for a world torn apart by man's inhumanity to man. "The fierce, fighting anguish of *Deep Song* is as objective as a shout," wrote one critic. According to program notes, "the forms of the dance – its swirls, crawls on the floor, contractions and falls – are kinetic experiences of the human experience in war... It is the anatomy of anguish from tragic events. " The tragedy of Spain is universalized through the choreography. "It is not Spain that we see in her

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clean impassioned movements: it is the realization that Spain's tragedy is ours, is the whole world's tragedy." The dance disappeared from the repertory in the 1940s, and it was not until 1989 that it was reconstructed by Martha Graham with Terese Capucilli.

## **DEPAK INE (2014)**

This work by the renowned Spanish choreographer Nacho Duato premiered at New York City Center on March 20, 2014. The piece is approximately 18 minutes long and has an ensemble cast of 10 dancers. Influenced by Darwin's theory, the choreographer created a dance that is mysterious, emotional and filled with images that evoke animal or insect life – all in reference to the human condition. The primal feel of this work makes it an excellent companion to Martha Graham's *The Rite of Spring* and several other works.

## **DIVERSION OF ANGELS (1948)**

*Diversions of Angels*, originally titled *Wilderness Stair*, premiered at the Palmer Auditorium of Connecticut College on August 13, 1948. The title as well as set piece designed by Isamu Noguchi suggestive of desert terrain, was discarded after the first performance, and the dance was reconceived as a plot-less ballet. *Diversion of Angels* is set to a romantic score by Norman Dello Joio and takes its themes from the infinite aspects of love. The Couple in Red embodies romantic love: and the Couple in yellow, a flirtatious and adolescent love.

Martha Graham recalled that when she first saw the work of the modern artist Wassily Kandinsky, she was astonished by his use of color, a bold slash of red across a blue background. She determined to make a dance that would express this. *Diversions of Angels* is that dance, and the Girl in Red, dashing across the stage, is the streak of red paint bisecting the Kandinsky canvas.

## **ECHO (2014)**

Andonis Foniadakis' work is inspired by the Greek myth of Narcissus and Echo but does not retell their story. Narcissus and his reflection, Echo and her multiple voices, the complexities of love and the hazards of vanity through a movement vocabulary that reflects the dancers' frenetic state.

## **EL PENITENTE (1940)**

"I tried to show the three aspects of all women in *El Penitente*. Every woman has that quality of being a virgin, of being the temptress-prostitute, of being the mother. I feel that these, more than anything, are the common life of all women." –Martha Graham.

*El Penitente* has the look of primitive folk art come to life. Born out of Martha Graham's fascination with the American southwest and specifically a sect of Penitents who believed in purification through severe penance, the dance has a simple formalism, episodic structure and naïve, archaic gestures.

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Constructed as a play within a play, *El Penitente* opens with the entrance of a troupe of strolling players. They don their costumes and enact a series of vignettes from the Bible. We see a childlike pageant that includes flagellation, revelation, seduction, repentance, crucifixion, and salvation – a wonderfully stylized meshing of dance, theater, and American and Catholic ritual. The players end their performance with a dance of celebration perhaps meant to inspire the generosity of the onlookers.

## **ERRAND INTO THE MAZE (1947)**

(may be performed with or without sets)

*Errand into the Maze* premiered in 1947 at the Ziegfeld Theater in New York City. With a score by Gian Carlo Menotti, and set design by Isamu Noguchi, the dance was choreographed as a duet for Martha Graham and Mark Ryder. It is loosely derived from the myth of Theseus, who journeys into the labyrinth to confront the Minotaur, a creature who is half man and half beast. In *Errand into the Maze*, Martha Graham retells the tale from the perspective of Ariadne who descends into the labyrinth to conquer the Minotaur. Substituting a heroine for the hero of Greek mythology in her dance. Martha Graham created a female protagonist who would confront the beast of fear, not just once, but three times, before finally overpowering him. Noguchi designed a set that consisted of a shaped frame, like the crotch of a tree or the pelvic bones of a woman. A long rope curves its way through the performance space and ends at this symbolic doorway. Influenced by the theories of the great psychologist Carl Jung, Martha Graham was exploring the mythological journey into the self in this dance.

## **IMPERIAL GESTURE (1935)**

*Imperial Gesture* is a testament to Graham's emergent political consciousness, and to her significant contribution in using art in service of social causes. The solo's premiere coincided with an invitation Graham received—and publically refused—from Nazi leaders to participate in a dance festival at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Of the dance, one reviewer remarked: "Here is the essence of the megalomania that conquers continents, of ego and a lust for authority." Shortly after its first performances in November 1935, Martha Graham performed *Imperial Gesture* at Carnegie Hall in support of workers' rights at the International Labor Defense Concert. History has remembered *Imperial Gesture* for its aesthetics as well as its politics, particularly for the black and apricot colored costume Graham designed herself. One critic described how Graham "skillfully manipulated" her skirt, "now in the manner of a cloak, now in the manner of a hood – empty until it enveloped and enshrouded her at the close."

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## **LAMENTATION (1930)**

*Lamentation* premiered in New York City on January 8, 1930, at Maxine Elliot's Theater, to the music by the Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály. The dance is performed almost entirely from a seated position, with the dancer incased in a tube of purple jersey. The diagonals and tensions formed by the dancer's body struggling within the material create a moving sculpture, a portrait that presents the very essence of grief. The figure in this dance is neither human nor animal, neither male nor female: it is grief itself. According to Martha Graham, after one performance of the work she was visited by a woman in the audience who had recently seen her child killed in an accident. Viewing *Lamentation* enabled her to grieve, as she realized that "grief was a dignified and valid emotion and that I could yield to it without shame."

## **LAMENTATION VARIATIONS (2007)**

*Lamentation Variations* is an ongoing creative project for the Company. It was originally conceived to commemorate the anniversary of 9/11 and premiered on that date in 2007. The work opens with a film from the early 1930s of Martha Graham. We see her dancing movements from her then new, and now iconic, solo, *Lamentation*. The variations that follow were developed under specific creative conditions. Each choreographer was asked to create a spontaneous choreographic sketch of their reaction to the Graham film, and was required to adhere to the following conditions: 10 hours of rehearsal, public domain music or silence, basic costumes and lighting design. Though it was planned to be performed on only one occasion, the audience reception for *Lamentation Variations* was such that it has been added to the permanent repertory of the Martha Graham Dance Company and new variations have been commissioned. The current repertory includes variations by choreographers Kyle Abraham, Aszure Barton, Michelle Dorrance, Liz Gerring, Larry Keigwin, Lar Lubovitch, Richard Move, Bulareyaung Pagarlava, Yvonne Rainer, Sonya Tayeh, and Doug Varone.

## **MAPLE LEAF RAG (1990)**

*Maple Leaf Rag* premiered in 1990 at the City Center Theater in New York City. The last complete ballet to be choreographed by Martha Graham, the dance takes a sly look at the foibles of a contemporary choreographer (such as Graham herself) and gently mocks the plight of the artist in the throes of creation. With costumes by fashion designer Calvin Klein and a score featuring the music of Scott Joplin, the dance was immediately a favorite for Graham audiences. A ridiculous boomerang-shaped barre dominates the stage, the perfect prop for the cast of unruly characters that inhabit this ballet. Like figments of the imagination, these dancers enter and exit at will in a parody of movement themes drawn from classic Graham repertory.

*Maple Leaf Rag* is Martha Graham's humorous and loving tribute to the choreographic muse. It is also a fond tribute to the Scott Joplin music of her youth and to her long association with Louis Horst, her one-time mentor and lover. "Louis," she says at the very beginning of the dance, "play me the 'Maple Leaf Rag.'"

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## MOON (1952)

### from **CANTICLE FOR INNOCENT COMEDIANS**

*Canticle for Innocent Comedians*, created in 1952, is considered to be atypical of most Graham works because it reveals some of her most lyrical choreography. The poem-like suite is Graham's great hymn to nature, and it celebrates the elements - sun, moon, Earth, wind, water, fire - in separate little dance odes. Sections of the choreography were captured in 1957 for the award-winning film about Graham, "A Dancer's World." The current reconstruction of the duet, "Moon," uses the choreography from that film and a score created from the improvised music on the film's soundtrack. The duet may evoke the moon's duality and its ever-changing balance between darkness and light.

## NIGHT JOURNEY (1947)

Commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, *Night Journey* was first performed in Cambridge, MA as part of Harvard University's Symposium on Music Criticism. The dance is part of Graham's Greek cycle and like *Cave of the Heart* (1946), based upon Medea, and *Clytemnestra* (1958), inspired by the *Oresteia*, Graham's interpretation makes the woman's experience central. When the dance premiered in New York City, Walter Terry wrote that Graham had succeeded in "transfer[ing] the action to the area where only Jocasta's heart and mind are real."

According to the myth, Oedipus was the son of King Laius of Thebes and Queen Jocasta. At his birth, an oracle prophesied that he would murder his father and so he was abandoned on a desolate mountainside. He was found there and protected by a Corinthian shepherd and grew to manhood as the adopted son of the King of Corinth. Once again, an oracle predicted that Oedipus would slay his father and marry his mother. Thinking the King of Corinth his true father, he fled the city, and in his wanderings met, quarreled with and finally killed a stranger who was King Laius of Thebes, his real father. Oedipus traveled on to Thebes, solved the riddle of the Sphinx, and was rewarded with the throne and the murdered King's widow, Queen Jocasta. He reigned nobly until a plague ravaged Thebes and the oracle declared that only banishment of the murderer of Laius would save the city. When the truth was discovered and the incestuous relationship revealed, Jocasta took her own life. Oedipus blinded himself and wandered the earth an outcast.

In her retelling of the Oedipus myth, Graham was almost certainly influenced by contemporary interest in psychology and the emerging (in America) theories of Freud and Jung, theories that explored the darker recesses of the human psyche, including erotic passion and the powerful sexual dynamics operating within the family. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Jocasta's experience is largely unexamined. But in *Night Journey*, the complex interweaving of emotions between mother and son, between mother and lover are paramount; in the central duet between Oedipus and Jocasta, passionate lovemaking is interrupted by maternal memories; the infant suckling at Jocasta's breast, the child cradled in her arms. And Graham's command of symbolic language is never more

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powerfully expressed; the rope which is the instrument of her death evokes both the marriage vows which tie Jocasta to Oedipus the King and the umbilical cord which once bound her to her son.

## **PANORAMA (1947)**

*Panorama* (1935), a signature work by Martha Graham, features student dancers (the original, choreographed in Bennington also included student dancers – part of the emphasis on participation in the revolutionary dance culture) and expresses the power of the people to make change.

## **PRELUDE AND REVOLT: DENISHAWN TO GRAHAM (1906-1936)**

Martha Graham came to the Denishawn School as a student in 1916 and performed with the group until 1924. *Prelude and Revolt* is a suite of dances that traces the emergence of Graham's unique theater and distinctive movement vocabulary from these Denishawn beginnings to the stark, explosive imagery of *Steps in the Street*.

A trio made up of solo works by Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, and Martha Graham sets the stage for *Prelude and Revolt*. This montage includes excerpts from *Gnossienne* (1917), *Tanagra* (1926), and *Incense* (1906). Martha Graham would have undoubtedly seen Miss Ruth perform *Incense*, as it remained a signature work throughout her long career. Its evocation of private ritual, as well as its dramatic use of stage effects, surely interested the young Graham. This influence can be seen in *Tanagra*, one of Graham's earliest compositions. Ted Shawn's choreography drew upon ritual as well. *Gnossienne*, also known as *A Priest of Knossos*, was inspired by a series of bas reliefs depicting a ritual to the Snake Goddess from the Temple of Knossos in Crete.

The Denishawn-style is full force in *Serenata Morisca* (1916), the next dance in this suite. The dance is best known for its quick turns, high kicks and fiery rhythms. The dancer is dressed in a tight fitting bodice and an ankle length skirt, weighted to ensure that the folds of the skirt will swing out as the dancer turns, making the movement of the fabric an integral part of the choreography.

By 1930, when Graham made *Lamentation*, she was in revolt against her Denishawn past, against ballet, and against the conventions of theatricality. *Lamentation* is performed almost entirely from a seated position, with the dancer encased in a tube of purple jersey. The diagonals and tensions formed by the dancer's body struggling within the material create a moving sculpture, a portrait that presents the very essence of grief. The fabric is again integral to the choreography, but in ways that Ruth St. Denis could never have foreseen.

"Steps in the Street" (1936) was a response to contemporary problems threatening the world, the rise of fascism in Europe. This dance required a new vocabulary, one that Graham had been developing over the previous decade. The female body is cast as an instrument of force; joints, muscles, and sinews at the ready. The dancers in "Steps in the Street" are prepared to speak out with an expressive vocabulary in order to make an impact upon a modern world.

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## **RUST** (2013)

Carolina Performing Arts commissioned Nacho Duato to create this work for the Graham Company, and it premiered in Chapel Hill, April 2013. *Rust* is a highly physical quintet for men. In it, Duato seeks to raise awareness in a public seemingly indifferent to the true horror of torture, which he equates with the plagues of terrorism and violence facing society today.

## **THE RITE OF SPRING** (1984)

Graham's connection to *The Rite of Spring* began in 1930 when she was propelled into international fame starring in the first American production of the work choreographed by Léonide Massine and conducted by Leopold Stokowski. In 1984, she decided to return to the score and create her own choreography for the *Rite*. The primal physical expression that is the hallmark of the Graham style has a deep connection with the primitive essences evoked in Stravinsky's revolutionary score. The community in Graham's *Rite* is defined through the complex, yet clear geometric patterns for the group that harken back to her ground-breaking works from the 1930s such as *Primitive Mysteries* and *Dark Meadow*. The organized structure for the group is a calm, somewhat disturbing, counterpoint to the violence of the story and vigorous physicality of the movement. Her choreography for the work, created over fifty years after she starred as the Chosen One for Massine, bookends her long creative career. Elements of her many theatrical innovations are distilled into this masterwork, one of her last.

## **SATYRIC FESTIVAL SONG** (1932)

*Satyrical Festival Song* premiered in 1932 at the Guild Theater in New York City, part of a suite of solo dances entitled Dance Songs. The dance was inspired by American Indian Pueblo culture and the clowns who satirize and mock the sacred rituals. Set to a score by Imre Weisshaus, with a costume designed by Martha Graham, the dance disappeared from the repertory for many years and was best known through the series of photographs published in Barbara Morgan's 1942 book on Martha Graham. It was reconstructed by Diane Grey and Janet Eilber in 1994, to music by Fernando Palacios, for a season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York.

## **SERENATA MORISCA** (1916)

In 1916, claiming that at twenty-two her new pupil was too old to ever become a good dancer, Ruth St. Denis took little interest in Martha Graham. It was St. Denis' partner, Ted Shawn, who took on Martha's early training, after being astonished by the ferocity of her performance in a classroom exercise he developed, the solo *Serenata Morisca*.

The dance is a sort of sensual "serenade" performed by the favorite of a king or Shah of some unspecified country and is a classic example of Denishawn orientalist style and early American

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modern dance. The steps have no ethnic authenticity. They are Shawn being exotic and what he called "barbaric", with overtones of East Indian technique. The costume is a voluminous sheer purple skirt with a bejeweled hem and bodice. The dancer's ankles are encircled with bells, and a large red flower sits behind her ear. She is arrogant, self confident, elegant, and sensual, dancing as much for her own pleasure as for the King's. Graham performed the solo on Denishawn tours 1921-23 and in the Greenwich Village Follies 1923-25.



## LIVE MUSIC

“What a joy to have a live orchestra.”

- Doris Hering, *Dance Magazine*

“The live music made all the difference in the world, inspiring the dancers’ performances to new heights.”

- Frederick W. Winship, United Press International

“An even greater joy was the live music... to which the company performed this feast of choreography.”

- Jennifer Dunning, *The New York Times*

“Dancers perform differently – about twice as interestingly – to live music.”

- Joan Acocella, *The New Yorker*

“... It’s a special joy to have live music.”

- Deborah Jowitt, *Village Voice*

### ***Critics and audiences agree: dance is better with live music.***

Live music has long been an important part of the Martha Graham Dance Company’s performances. Graham had an unmatched record of commissioning new scores for dance; over a period of 40 years, all but a handful of her dances used music that was written especially for her.

The composers who wrote for Graham include Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, Paul Hindemith, Gian Carlo Menotti, William Schuman, Carlos Chavez, Darius Milhaud, Norman Dello Joio, Henry Cowell, and Alan Hovhaness.

All of the dances in the Company’s current repertory can be performed with live music, greatly enhancing the impact of the performances. Programs can be designed for as few as 16 musicians, and company Music Director Aaron Sherber will conduct all rehearsals and performances.





## **COLLATERAL OFFERINGS**

### **Pre-performance movement workshop for audience members**

A Company artist introduces the dances being performed and leads audience members in learning movements that they will recognize in the program, 20-30 minutes

### **Master Classes**

Senior Members of the Company work with beginning, intermediate or advanced dance students in intensive sessions introducing them to the Martha Graham Technique and excerpts from the repertory, 1.5 hours

### **Weekday Performance/Demonstration for Students Grade 3 and up**

Company members present a one-hour performance with demonstrations of how emotion is conveyed through Martha Graham's "body language" and introducing the works to be performed. This presentation includes information about Martha Graham, demonstration of her revolutionary technique and the performance of excerpts from the Company's repertory.

(depending upon scheduling within/around the engagement period)

"A Dancer's Journal:" Website and Study Guide to accompany Performance/Demonstration for Students The Martha Graham Center of Contemporary dance and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts developed a website

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/marthagraham/index.htm>

and an eight-page, four-color "Cue Sheet" study guide that has won kudos from arts educators across the country. Available exclusively through the Martha Graham Dance Company, the study guides (see enclosed in this package) can be available three weeks before the Company's performance/demonstration to assist student to preparing for the event, along with a one-page outline for teachers about how to use the website resource in conjunction with the students' study guides.

In conjunction with Company performance/demonstration for students

### **Professional Development Workshop for Teachers**

Two separate workshops introduce teachers to new ways to use the arts to implement innovative lessons based on two of Martha Graham's seminal works: "Steps in the Street" from *Chronicle* (1936) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944).



## **Film Screenings**

Two films to which Martha Graham Center has exclusive rights are available to be screened with commentary from a artist, regarding the work and how it relates to Martha's contribution to American culture. Choose between "An Evening of Conversation and Dance with Martha Graham," which includes *Cave of the Heart*, *Errand into the Maze*, and *Acts of Light*, or "The Martha Graham Dance Company: Five Dances by Martha Graham," which includes *El Penitente*, *Diversion of Angels*, "Steps in the Street" from *Chronicle*, *Hérodiade*, and *Maple Leaf Rag*.

Approximately 2 hours

## **Genesis of a Masterpiece: The Graham-Copland Collaboration**

A deep legendary correspondence took place between Martha Graham and composer Aaron Copland, reflecting their artistic collaboration and lifelong friendship. Their exchange has been edited to create a riveting theatrical reading that includes exclusive material from the Graham archives and encompasses multi-media (archival films, photographs, audio clips) and live dance performance.

1 hour and 20 minutes, including Q & A

## **Customized Events for Presenters and Cultural/ Education Partners**

Through the Martha Graham Dance Company, Graham 2, and our roster of Teaching Artists and Company Alumni, the Martha Graham Center has a wide range of offerings available for presenters, communities, schools and universities. In addition, we are eager to foster collaborations nation-wide to develop new resources - from theatrical presentations to curricula for student of all ages.

The Graham legacy provides almost limitless possibilities for events, performances and curricula that can enhance a range of subjects for a range of audiences. The following list includes some suggestions for projects that can be tailored for specific audiences. They may be presented as stand-alone events or in conjunction with main stage Martha Graham Dance Company performances.

## **Martha Graham School Teaching Artists**

Senior teaching artists are available for sequential workshops in elementary and secondary school classrooms. Graham 2, the pre-professional troupe of the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, is available to tour schools throughout a district with lecture-demonstrations either in conjunction with or prior to a Martha Graham Dance Company engagement.



## Unique topics for Lecture-Demonstrations

Lecture-Demonstration can be customized for any size venue by adding dancers and stagecraft.

- Martha Graham and the Revolution in American Dance
- Reinventing Theater: The theatrical innovations of Martha Graham
- Speaking Without Words: The dance technique created by Martha Graham
- Martha Graham and...

American music, American poetry and literature, The Greek Tragedies, Feminism and the rise of the individual, Abstract Expressionism, American Psychology, and many others.

## Panel Discussions coordinated with experts from the community

Graham Artists are available to participate with organizations such as corporations, libraries, museums and civics groups in seminars and panel discussions that are of specific interest within a community. Discussions might revolve around topics other than dance. For example, a panel of scientist, executives and artists exploring "the importance of risk" or a corporate gathering focusing on "growth through collaboration" or "elements of creativity."

## Of Special Interest to University Presenters

Although the above offerings are designed for all types of presenters, many of them also offer opportunities for interdepartmental collaborations within a university setting. Some additional examples:

- Dance Department: Prior to the Martha Graham Dance Company's main performances, teaching artists are available to provide a "Graham Intensive" course with the dance department. This would include a semester of the Graham technique, staging of Graham excerpts and a student production of one of the Graham masterworks. These student productions can be coordinated with a mainstage performance of the Company. In recent years performances of the company that include a short performance by local students have been enormously popular (see *Panorama*).
- Theater Department: Theater students of the University might prepare monologues and scenes from the classics of theater that Graham has used as inspiration for many of her works. Collaborative events such as a production of *Medea* or *Oedipus Rex* meshed with excerpts from Graham's *Cave of the Heart* (the work based on *Medea*) and/or *Night Journey* could be developed.
- Music Department: The Martha Graham Center and the Music Department could develop curriculum for student composers and choreographers based on the work of Graham and her collaborators, e.g., the use of ritual in composition, social political themes expressed through art, etc. The Music Department might also perform an evening of music commissioned by Graham (without dance performed), provide live music for the main Company performances and for lectures on Graham's influence American music.

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- Regional outreach—Seminar for Dance Educators: The University could host a statewide seminar for dance educators. Graham Teaching Artists would provide a 2-1/2 day workshop introducing the dance teachers to Graham’s legacy, her technique and repertory excerpts. Audio/visual materials would be provided for the educator’s use with their own students.
- Media Department: This department might consider exploring new ways to document classic dance. Documentation of the university dance students rehearsing and performing a Graham work might be interspersed with use of archival photos, films, and interviews to create a documentary and a method of preserving an ephemeral art form. Student filmmakers might also provide innovative projections (using new and archival footage) for a Graham performance, lecture demonstration or other event.
- American History/Women’s Studies: American Modern Dance as the voice of the new American woman. This department could work with Graham Artists to research and explore the historical context that gave rise to specific Graham works. They could study and create events that explore the revolution—led almost entirely by woman—that forged America’s identity and our unique form of self-expression.
- Multi-Department Collaboration: The University of Michigan created a residency for Martha’s Centenary which focused many university departments and campus events on one of Martha Graham’s masterworks: Appalachian Spring, Similar campus-wide involvement could be designed for a number of Graham’s works. This involvement would explore specific thematic material from the approach of many different disciplines.

For more information or to discuss specific collaborations, please contact

- Faye Rosenbaum (frosenbaum@marthagraham.org)
- or Janet Eilber (jeilber@marthagraham.org) or call 212.229.9200.



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## Staff

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| LaRue Allen     | Executive Director  |
| Janet Eilber    | Artistic Director   |
| Denise Vale     | Senior Artistic Associate   |
| Aaron Sherber   | Music Director  |
| Faye Rosenbaum  | General Manager   |
| Simona Ferrara  | Company Manager   |
| A. Apostol      | Assistant to the Executive Director   |
| Amanda Hameline | Development Associate   |
| Brigid Pierce   | Marketing Manager   |
| Julian Zentner  | Marketing and Archives Assistant  |
| Charley Harris  | Administrative Assistant  |
| Haejin Han      | Production Manager  |
| Nicholas Houfek | Lighting Supervisor   |
| Karen Young     | Costume Supervisor  |
| Jenny O'Donnell | Wardrobe Supervisor   |
| Anne Poslusny   | Theatrical Property Restorer  |
| Jennifer Patten | Head of School  |
| Shelby Leshine  | School Administrator  |
| Virginie Mécène | Program Director: Two-Year Certificate Program, Artistic Director: Graham 2 |
| Tadej Brdnik    | Program Director: Accelerated and Extension Programs                        |
| Tami Alesson    | Director of Student Affairs and Government Program Officer                  |
| Janet Stapleton | Press Agent   |

Martha Graham Dance Company  
55 Bethune Street | New York, NY, 10014

212.229.9200

